

# **HEALTH ALERT**

April 2, 2004

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## **West Nile Virus Risk in City of Long Beach May Be Reduced by Residents' Assistance to Prevent Mosquito Breeding**

The City of Long Beach Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) is advising residents to take precautions against West Nile Virus (WNV). Birds in Orange County, Fullerton and the San Gabriel Valley were recently identified to be infected with the virus, which is an early indicator of the presence of WNV in Southern California. Since WNV is spread by mosquitoes, local residents may provide valuable assistance in reducing local risk of the virus by eliminating standing water to prevent breeding of mosquitoes.

WNV is transmitted to humans and animals through the bite of an infected mosquito. Mosquitoes become infected with WNV when they feed on infected birds. As temperatures rise in the coming months, mosquito populations are expected to increase. With this increase in the mosquito population, chances for WNV transmission will be higher. Three WNV positive birds were found last year in Long Beach.

The DHHS controls breeding mosquitoes on a regular basis in public areas. However, the DHHS needs the assistance of local residents to keep mosquito breeding to a minimum on private property. Residents are requested to take the following precautions to protect themselves and control mosquito breeding:

- Remove pools of standing or stagnant water, which provide a breeding ground for mosquitoes. Debris piles, buckets, barrels, kid's toys, and tire swings are some common sources of stagnant water. Mosquitoes need water to complete their life cycle, therefore they are most active around stagnant water;
- Clear gutters and drains of standing water;
- Change water in birdbaths frequently;
- Properly maintain clean swimming pools and spas with proper filtration and chlorination levels;
- Limit the watering of lawns and outdoor plants to twice a week to avoid run off to gutters and around sprinklers;

- Limit your time outdoors when you notice mosquito activity (primarily at dusk and dawn) If you remain outdoors while mosquitoes are biting, wear clothing that provides more coverage of your skin (such as long sleeved shirts and pants);
- Use mosquito repellents containing DEET. **Repellents should not be used on infants;** and
- Make sure that doors and windows have tight fitting screens. Repair or replace screens that have tears or holes.

Businesses are also urged to check their property weekly and eliminate any standing or stagnant water and to maintain swimming pools to summertime conditions. Green or dirty pools can breed thousands of mosquitoes in a week's time, unnecessarily increasing the population's risk to WNV.

The DHHS is also requesting residents to cooperate by reporting any dead birds to **1-877-WNV-BIRD**. Dead birds, especially crows, may be an early indication of WNV activity. Working together, the DHHS and Long Beach Residents can break the mosquito life cycle and minimize the risk of mosquito-borne illness such as WNV.

If you have any questions regarding mosquito control measures in the City of Long Beach, please feel free to contact the DHHS' Vector Control Program at (562) 570-4132 or go the DHHS' website at [www.longbeach.gov/health](http://www.longbeach.gov/health). Further information may be obtained at the State of California Department of Health Services website at [www.westnile.ca.gov](http://www.westnile.ca.gov), or at the Federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at [www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile).